

First Reported Delaware Human West Nile Virus Case in Two Years

FIRST REPORTED DELAWARE HUMAN WEST NILE VIRUS CASE IN TWO YEARS

DOVER —A 6-year-old Sussex County girl was briefly hospitalized with West Nile Virus (WNV) and is now recovering at home. The case is the first human WNV case reported since 2013. The mosquito-borne illness can become serious and the Division of Public Health reminds people to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

WNV is transmitted by mosquitoes, generally from spring to fall. Although nearly 80 percent of people infected with WNV will not become ill and only a little less than 20 percent of those infected will develop West Nile fever, with mild symptoms (fever, headache, body aches, a skin rash on the chest or back and swollen lymph glands), one in 150 people infected develop severe infection (West Nile encephalitis or meningitis).

Symptoms of severe WNV infection include headache, high fever, stiff neck, and/or tremors and muscle weakness. The elderly and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk. Anyone who experiences any of these severe symptoms should seek medical help immediately. Symptoms may progress to stupor, disorientation, coma, convulsions, paralysis, and possibly death.

“This new human case is a reminder that West Nile virus is still active in Delaware,” said Dr. Karyl Rattay, Division of Public Health Director. “It’s tempting with the distractions of summer fun to forget to protect you and your loved ones from insect bites. These bites can cause much more serious health problems than just itching and discomfort.”

Mosquitoes can also carry Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE),

and several other diseases that cause brain inflammation (encephalitis) and can be fatal to humans and animals. To avoid mosquito bites and reduce the risk of infection, individuals should:

- When outside, wear shoes, long-sleeved shirts, and pants. Mosquito netting can protect one's face and neck, and infants in carriages, strollers, and playpens. Mosquitoes are most active at dusk and during the early-morning hours.
- Mosquito repellents containing DEET can be applied to the skin, but will last only a few hours before reapplication is necessary. Use insect repellent containing less than 50 percent DEET for adults. The current American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend using 10 to 30 percent DEET for children above 2 months old. The higher the strength, the longer the DEET provides protection which varies between two to five hours.
- Read labels carefully and always follow the instructions. DEET should not be used on children younger than 2 months.
- Prevent mosquitoes from entering the house by using screens and keeping windows and doorways tightly sealed. Mosquitoes prefer shallow water and tall vegetation. Eliminate standing water in your yard by changing birdbath water weekly, regularly draining pet dishes and plant pot saucers, and checking gutters, pool covers, and tarps for standing water. Store buckets, wheelbarrows, and wading pools upside down. Keep grass mowed.

In Delaware, there were no reported human WNV cases in 2014, three cases in 2013, and nine cases in 2012 with one fatality. To report suspected cases of human WNV, call the DPH Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at 888-295-5156.

To report high numbers of biting mosquitoes or other concerns, contact the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) Mosquito Control Section field offices:

- Glasgow Office (upstate) – 302-836-2555, for all of New Castle County and the northern half of Kent County, including Dover.
- Milford Office (downstate) – 302-422-1512, for the southern

half of Kent County south of Dover, and for all of Sussex County.

Calls will be answered by staff from Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Callers after business hours or during weekends or holidays should leave a message giving their name, phone number, address and a brief description of their need or problem.

For more information on DNREC Mosquito Control, call 302-739-9917 or visit www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/Services/Pages/MosquitoSection.aspx.

For more information about WNV in horses, contact the Delaware Department of Agriculture at 302-698-4500 or 800-282-8685 (Delaware only).

For more general information on WNV, visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm.

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